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AUTHOR	Gillis, Don
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ABSTRACT

Teaching as a Performing Art is a teacher education program developed for the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. It is a methodology designed to elicit better teacher performance in order to produce more effective student performance. Designed for closed-circuit television or resource center access, the course consists of 52 half-hours of videotape, 26 half-hours of audio tapes, a student guidebook, and a textbook. The videotapes are divided equally into (1) theory and performance demonstration units, and (2) interviews and discussions with guest faculty from the arts and education. The theory-demonstration sessions consist of the principle philosophies and concepts with 80 performance illustrations. Performance demonstrations were created in ecology, language arts, geometry, history, chemistry, math, biology, media arts, music, and art to further illustrate modes and styles of performance, adaptivity, ensemble techniques, theatrical skills, the pedagogy of the arts, nonverbal communication, and the training-educative-and-celebrative teaching experience. The entire series was written and produced by students and staff at the University of South Carolina. (RC)

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TEACHING AS A PERFORMING ART

.....don gillis

Teaching is an act of performance. In order to be a better teacher, one must first become a better performer.

The objective of teaching is to cause performance to take place in others. The ability to perform is demonstration of materials learned.

The power of the arts to create and sustain an emotional environment is fundamental to our belief that no learning may be accomplished except through the mutually-involved experience between teacher and student. In the three essential experiences in the teaching-learning experience (training, educative, and celebrative), the arts provide the affect through which cognitive may be transmitted more dynamically and enduringly.

Since all acts of decision pertaining to life values are based on feeling rather than intellect, it follows that the acquisition of knowledge through an emotional environment is more meaningful because it will be used in the expression of feelings rather than in the action acquired by cognitive assimilation.

The pedagogy of the arts, time-proven in its centuries-old practice of perfection goals in creation and performance, is the fundament upon which the methodology of "Teaching as a performing art" is based.

Its two functions of "one-to-one" (master-pupil) and the "ensemble" (leader-group) constitute the model for our teaching practice. In each case, the "teacher" is one who, knowing, shows the way in performance. In each case, mastery of subject content being taught is implied.

It is the practice of performance-teaching in the arts which marks the difference between attaining the ideal of perfection and that tradi-

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tional practice of the behavioralist which argues that learning must be based on an average represented by a curve in which nothing but the cognitive can be measured.

We accept the similarities that exist between teachers and performing artists: Both have a place to perform, both have a variety of performance styles and modes, both have an audience, a body of literature, and an instrument for use in performance. That the "instrument" is self-plus-performance skills in all arts performance makes its comparison to the art of teaching even more meaningful.

Of all the arts, that of drama is most closely allied to the teaching process. The traditional methodologies practiced in teacher education fail to concentrate on the "how"-to-teach as it pertains to interpersonal relationships. There are few, if any, practices taught in the involvement of students in the performance of materials being learned.

Recognizing this as a failure in current practices, "Teaching as a performing art" advocates the acquisition of dramatic skills related to the solo performance of the teacher plus the mastery of techniques used in the ensemble as practiced within the performing arts.

Performance is self-testing. Unless one knows, one cannot perform.

Performance, however, requires performance materials. Since these do not commonly exist (apart from the arts), the principle of adaptive creation is involved in order to transform the printed page into performable formats. The ensemble process is one in which students are involved in the creation, preparation, and performance of adaptive materials.

While it is our objective to transform the teacher by providing ways in which communication skills are strengthened by the acquisition of dra-

matic techniques, it is not alone that which insures the validity of our methodology. Without that, however, it is impossible to function as ensemble leader--and it is the function of the ensemble which is the key to learning through performance.

We believe that "Teaching as a performing art" is a valid methodology in any study area and for every age level.

We believe that the time-honored principles of honesty, integrity, dedication, and spirituality (the substance of achieving perfection in creation and performance in the arts) will manifest a profound effect when incorporated into our philosophies and practices in teaching. And we argue incontrovertibly that it is only through the affect that the permanence of learning can be achieved.

If we, as a civilization, will admit that everything we use in our daily living exists only because an artist translates concepts into reality, then we are on our way to the recognition that the arts are the lifeblood of that most important life-changing process called teaching.

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"Teaching as a Performing Art" is a teacher education program developed for the College of Education at the University of South Carolina under a grant from the Model Schools and the State of South Carolina, and was produced at the university's Instructional Services Center by the Center for Media Arts Studies.

Its objective is the transformation of the teacher, the classroom, and the student. It is a methodology designed to enable better performance to occur by the teacher in order to enable more effective performance by students.

Designed for closed-circuit television or resource center access, the course consists of 52 half-hours of video-tape, 26 half-hours of audio tapes, a student guidebook, and a textbook. The video tapes are divided equally into: (a) theory and performance demonstration units, and (b) interviews and discussions with guest faculty from the arts and education. Among this group are Eva Marie Saint, award-winning actress of stage, screen, and television; Henry Hewes, dramatic critic of the Saturday Review; William Hugg, director of dance and artist performer from South Florida University; Dr. Thomas F. Jones, vice-president for research at MIT; Frank Brieff, conductor-emeritus of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra; Nelson Olmsted, professional story-teller and actor; Allen King Cooper, Jr., director of juvenile treatment and training for the Bureau of Youth Services of the department of welfare, the state of Pennsylvania; Jeffrey Hayden, motion picture and television director; Roger Jacobi, president of National Music Camp and Interlochen Arts Academy, and Henry Cauthen, president of South Carolina Educational Television and member of the National Council of the Arts.

The theory-demonstration sessions consist of the principal philosophies and concepts with some eighty performance illustrations validating our claim that this methodology may be used in any subject area and at any age level.

Such performance demonstrations were created in Ecology, Language Arts, geometry, history, chemistry, math, biology, media arts, music, and art to further illustrate modes and styles of performance, adaptivity, ensemble techniques, theatrical skills, the pedagogy of the arts, non-verbal communication, and the training-educative-and-celebrative teaching experience.

With the exception of supervisory work by Dr. Leon Lessinger (Dean of the College of Education), Mr. Jerry Keeter (Director of Instructional Ser-

vices) and Dr. Don Gillis (Director of the Center for Media Arts Studies), the entire series was written and produced by students and staff at the University of South Carolina.

This group, involving some twenty people, formed the "ensemble" whose creative adaptivity, preparation and performance resulted in the teaching materials in this teacher education course.

Budget for the series was $56,000.00 plus administrative costs and university support factors. Its annual budget for use on closed circuit TV to serve five regional campuses of the university is approximately $9,000.00 (including teacher and facilitator stipends, workshops, etc.) and will be used by 250-300 educators, students and in-service teachers per semester.

Six complete sets of video-audio tapes are placed in the major educational districts of the state for use by teachers as part of the concentrated program to develop teacher affectiveness. Workshops have been held and will continue to be held as part of the on-going process of state wide teacher improvement, with this course used as the instructional methodology. The course is currently being used in teacher improvement by the Los Angeles County School system and is being considered for adoption by educators in Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, and Michigan. The series is marketed through the University of South Carolina's Instructional Services Center.

While the program is too recent to have had opportunity for substantiative data to develop, there has been enthusiastic feedback from in-service teachers who have taken the course and who are currently using the methods in teaching practice. Thus far approximately one hundred teachers and teaching staff have been trained in workshops and classes. They report enthusiastic response from students, relief from discipline problems, eager response to

the concept of student-created-and-performed subject materials, validation that performance is indeed self-testing, and finally, increase in parental and community interest as a result of the enthusiasm generated by participating students.

Such small sampling is not of itself validation. Such responses do, however, indicate a trend toward acceptance of this teaching practice which leads us to believe that "Teaching as a performing art" will make a difference in the future of American education.

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